

Ralph F. Gates Oral History

OH 020

3 February 1971

1 transcript draft, 1 reel-to-reel tape

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Indiana State Library

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Biographical Note:

Ralph Fesler Gates was born on February 24, 1893, in Columbia City, Indiana. His parents were Benton E. and Alice (Fesler) Gates. He received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Michigan. After graduation, he returned home to enter his father's law practice. On August 8, 1917, he entered the U.S. Naval Reserve as Ensign and served during World War I. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant and was head of the U.S. Navy air station in LeCroisic, France. Following the war, he married Helene Edwards, with who he had two children, Robert and Patricia.

In 1944, Gates was elected Governor of Indiana, the first Republican to hold that office since 1928. During his term, he created departments to deal with revenue problems, flood control, veteran's affairs, and traffic safety. After leaving office in 1949, he returned to his Columbia City law practice. His son and daughter joined the practice and he remained active in the firm until 1974. Gates served one term each as Columbia City Attorney and Whitley County Attorney (appointed 1922). In addition to his legal activities, he served as Indiana Commander of the American Legion, Republican Party District Chairman (1926-1941), Chairman of the Indiana State Republican Central Committee (1941-1944), and a national committeeman of the Republican Party. He died on July 28, 1978.

Sources:

Indiana Governor Ralph F. Gates. Indiana Historical Bureau. 12 May 2006.
<<http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/ihb/govportraits/gates.html>>.

Post, Margaret Moore. First Ladies of Indiana and The Governors, 1816-1984. Indianapolis: Pierson Printing Company, 1984.

Who's Who and What's What in Indiana Politics. Indianapolis: James E. Perry, 1944.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection contains a transcript draft and tape of an interview with Ralph F. Gates conducted by Randall Jehs. Gates discusses his family and childhood; his political views; Indiana Republican politics and his involvement; practicing law; the Ku Klux Klan;

the American Legion; and running for Governor and his term in office. He also talks about Albert Beveridge, Arch Bobbitt, Homer Capehart, Henry Schricker, Henry Wallace, James E. Watson, Wendell Willkie, and various other Indiana political figures.

Item Listing:

1971 Feb. 3 Reel-to-reel tape

1971 Feb. 3 Oral history transcript draft

Collection Information:

<i>Size of Collection:</i>	1 transcript draft, 1 reel-to-reel tape
<i>Collection Dates:</i>	3 February 1971
<i>Provenance:</i>	Indiana State Library Oral History Project
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<i>Notes:</i>	